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1992 DUCK BREEDING POPULATIONS UP 11 PERCENT FROM LAST YEAR'S SURVEY ESTIMATES

This spring's breeding duck populations in the United States and Canada are up 11 percent from 1991 estimates, but still remain below the long-term average, the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported today.

"This year's numbers are looking up," said John Turner, director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. "But to help sustain this trend, we must continue efforts to reverse habitat loss and improve cover for nesting waterfowl."

The breeding population estimate for ducks in all surveyed areas totalled 29.4 million, up from last year's 26.6 million. Overall, duck populations are still 8 percent below the long-term (1955-1991) average.

Habitat conditions this year were more favorable than in recent years. The estimated number of May ponds increased 12 percent from 1991 in Prairie Canada, but remained 18 percent below the long term average. In the north central United States, the pond estimate increased 17 percent from last year, but remained 35 percent below the long-term average. Upland plant cover around wetlands, which provides essential habitat for ducks and other wildlife, remains in poor condition in many areas.

The size of the 1992 mallard breeding population was 6 million, up 10 percent from 1991 and is the highest estimate since 1988. This increase was found primarily in portions of southern Saskatchewan and Manitoba where wetlands benefitted from high levels of precipitation last summer and this spring. Yet overall, mallard numbers remain 17 percent below the 1955-91 average.

The northern pintail population estimate totalled 2.1 million, and remains 54 percent below the 1955-91 average. The slight increase, up from last year's 1.8 million, is not statistically significant and pintail populations should be considered similar to last year's.

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The long-term decline of this species continues to be of concern to the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Blue-winged teal populations reached 4.3 million in 1992, close to their long-term average population.

Population estimates for American widgeon, green-winged teal, northern shoveler, canvasback, and scaup in 1992 were similar to those in 1991. The numbers of American widgeon and greater and lesser scaup are 16 and 17 percent below the long-term average, respectively.

Unlike most prairie-nesting species, gadwall numbers remain well above the long-term average. The total number of redheads in 1992 is 34 percent higher than last year, near the long-term average.

Efforts to restore North America's waterfowl populations involve a broad range of activities by Fish and Wildlife Service, state wildlife agencies, and many private groups and individuals. For example, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, an international partnership effort to conserve the continent's remaining wetlands and increase migratory bird populations, has raised an estimated \$400 million in public and private funds for waterfowl restoration in the United States since 1989.

Waterfowl harvest estimates for 1991 were also released recently. These figures are compiled from survey cards distributed to waterfowl hunters purchasing Federal Duck Stamps.

1991 duck stamp sales in the Atlantic Flyway totalled 311,438 -- down 5 percent from 1990. There was a 10 percent increase in duck harvests, a 1 percent increase in goose harvests and a 51 percent increase in coot harvests.

In the Mississippi Flyway duck stamp sales totalled 542,126 -- down 3 percent from 1990. There was a 7 percent increase in the number of both ducks and geese harvested, with a 6 percent decrease in the number of coots harvested.

In the Central Flyway duck stamp sales totalled 217,938 -- down 9 percent from 1990 figures. Duck harvests decreased by 28 percent, goose harvests decreased by 12 percent, and coot harvests decreased by 22 percent.

In the Pacific Flyway duck stamp sales totalled 183,428 -- down 6 percent from 1990. Duck harvests decreased by 7 percent, goose harvests decreased by 9 percent and coot harvests increased by 21 percent.

Overall, 1991 duck stamp sales totalled 1,267,019 -- down 5 percent from 1990. Duck harvests decreased by 1 percent while there was no change in goose and coot harvests. The 1991 duck stamp sales estimate are preliminary and should increase upon receipt of final 1991 sales.

Following is a table of breeding populations for 10 species of ducks in surveyed areas.

Table 3. Breeding population estimates for 10 species of ducks, 1955-92 (in thousands).

Year	Mallard Est.	Gadwall Est.	American wigeon Est.	Green-winged teal Est.	Blue-winged teal Est.
1955	8355.9	662.7	3066.7	1822.8	5381.2
1956	9841.5	782.6	3117.6	1479.5	4762.9
1957	9151.3	691.0	2851.5	1053.3	4312.4
1958	10993.6	453.8	2421.3	1326.1	5164.7
1959	8746.1	527.2	3703.0	2601.1	5048.2
1960	7164.1	720.9	2936.5	1389.8	4184.7
1961	6912.0	594.3	2817.3	1708.7	3655.0
1962	5139.4	846.3	1882.0	700.3	2940.2
1963	6723.2	1092.0	1705.9	1155.3	3680.5
1964	5740.2	825.1	2494.7	1505.0	3980.8
1965	5101.2	1269.7	2312.3	1237.2	3569.6
1966	6679.7	1672.3	2281.9	1579.6	3718.3
1967	7470.4	1384.6	2320.0	1588.1	4509.2
1968	7018.5	1947.0	2281.5	1405.3	3459.0
1969	7536.0	1573.0	2918.6	1487.5	4132.7
1970	9960.0	1606.1	3447.0	2171.0	4858.1
1971	9305.9	1602.5	3281.3	1881.3	4606.5
1972	9254.9	1620.5	3172.4	1894.9	4276.5
1973	8060.2	1246.5	2863.7	1935.9	3333.8
1974	6681.0	1591.8	2665.1	1839.9	4968.2
1975	7494.0	1641.0	2692.0	1666.5	5828.8
1976	7894.4	1244.7	2476.1	1535.8	4746.6
1977	7395.8	1311.5	2559.8	1290.6	4589.0
1978	7353.4	1560.5	3285.5	2193.9	4471.0
1979	7815.5	1750.5	3087.3	2018.9	4860.5
1980	7570.0	1390.6	3557.6	993.7	4884.1
1981	6367.1	1401.5	2923.5	1851.4	3725.9
1982	6253.5	1637.3	2440.4	1542.9	3656.8
1983	6312.9	1517.0	2605.9	1835.7	3366.4
1984	5246.6	1531.6	2987.0	1361.0	3956.2
1985	4754.2	1304.4	2039.7	1435.3	3459.1
1986	6835.6	1539.6	1731.7	1681.7	4463.4
1987	5612.8	1310.8	1982.3	2003.1	3517.6
1988	6331.3	1349.2	2194.4	2057.9	3975.4
1989	5649.7	1415.9	1973.9	1842.7	3128.3
1990	5452.1	1672.0	1960.2	1799.7	2776.4
1991	5444.4	1583.6	2254.1	1557.9	3763.7
1992	5979.5	2032.8	2197.9	1773.1	4333.1
1955-91 Avg.	7179	1294	2627	1659	4154
Percent Change in 1992 From:					
1991	+10	+28	-2	+14	+15
1955-91 Avg.	-17	+57	-16	7	+4

Table 3. Continued.

Year	Northern shoveler	Northern pintail	Redhead	Canvasback	Scaup
	Est.	Est.	Est.	Est.	Est.
1955	1571.3	9387.1	572.1	599.2	5608.9
1956	1630.4	9897.3	755.1	695.8	5733.8
1957	1458.7	6310.7	542.2	614.5	5745.3
1958	1187.3	5552.4	443.1	742.4	5285.8
1959	1455.8	5482.9	492.8	480.6	6961.3
1960	1743.1	5414.2	494.7	599.5	4825.9
1961	1256.4	3676.0	319.1	427.6	5335.3
1962	1182.5	3395.4	503.3	353.7	5240.3
1963	1278.3	3621.9	413.0	499.4	5396.4
1964	1608.1	3013.3	526.5	649.1	5057.9
1965	1372.2	3549.4	599.0	520.2	4651.5
1966	2102.8	4763.7	712.8	658.3	4431.8
1967	2291.0	5270.4	734.2	500.2	4931.7
1968	1645.6	3469.7	492.5	561.3	4360.3
1969	2145.2	5900.2	632.5	500.8	5130.6
1970	2220.1	6369.3	624.2	577.7	5633.9
1971	2005.2	5873.7	534.4	443.8	5063.1
1972	2441.4	7018.1	550.7	426.2	7932.0
1973	1624.3	4351.1	496.2	617.0	6221.5
1974	2006.3	6583.0	626.6	504.2	5720.4
1975	1962.1	5878.1	828.7	591.3	6426.9
1976	1755.8	5475.1	668.4	609.5	5778.7
1977	1475.1	3935.2	637.1	667.0	6246.8
1978	1977.6	5105.5	737.8	389.1	5935.8
1979	2385.5	5382.2	694.7	572.8	7540.3
1980	1901.9	4513.8	753.1	726.7	6314.2
1981	2324.7	3472.3	595.7	610.3	5917.6
1982	2140.6	3708.5	616.8	510.3	5468.1
1983	1870.2	3506.1	708.7	522.7	7135.6
1984	1619.5	2968.7	673.0	520.1	6909.1
1985	1696.7	2511.4	578.6	373.0	5038.1
1986	2117.7	2736.5	559.9	436.8	5204.3
1987	1951.1	2629.2	502.3	450.5	4837.4
1988	1680.2	2011.2	441.1	436.2	4683.8
1989	1539.5	2112.5	510.9	477.9	4344.3
1990	1759.4	2256.7	480.9	539.3	4293.7
1991	1716.2	1803.4	445.6	491.2	5255.4
1992	1954.4	2012.6	595.6	481.5	4806.8
1955-91 Avg.	1786	4565	581	537	5584
Percent Change in 1992 From:					
1991	+14	+12	+34	-2	-9
1955-91 Avg.	+9	-56	+2	-10	-14